



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

## **Death/Bereavement Information Sheet in Bujumbura.**

**Prepared by**

**British High Commission Kigali, Rwanda.**

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When the death occurs overseas, family and friends in the UK can feel additional distress as they are unfamiliar with foreign procedures and perhaps are unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. You may be uncertain about what to do next or who to contact for advice. Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and The British Embassy Liaison Office in Bujumbura (BELO) are ready to help as far as they can.

These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make. You should be aware that Burundi procedures differ significantly to those in the United Kingdom and that, while we understand your need for arrangements to be made quickly, this is not always possible.

*The information contained in this document is not meant to be a definitive statement of the law, nor is it to be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice. While care has been taken in compiling these notes, the British High Commission in Kigali, the British Embassy Liaison Office Bujumbura (BELO) or HM Government accepts no legal liability for their contents.*

### **Standard Procedures**

Following the death of a British national in Burundi, the next of kin, or a formally appointed representative, must decide whether to:

- Repatriate the deceased to the UK,
- Have a local burial,
- Have a local cremation and the ashes repatriated to the UK or
- Have a local cremation and the ashes scattered in Burundi.

If the deceased was covered by travel insurance, it is important for the next of kin to contact the insurance company without delay. If there is no insurance cover, the cost of repatriation or cremation will need to be met by family or friends. The services of an international undertaker are normally necessary to help with these arrangements.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office or our British Embassy Liaison Office (BELO) in Bujumbura does not have a budget to meet these costs. The next of kin should also be aware that all hospital bills must be paid before the body of the deceased can be released.

Consular staff in London will pass on to the British Embassy Liaison Office (BELO) in Bujumbura the wishes of the next of kin about disposal of the deceased person's body, and details of who is taking responsibility for the costs involved. We will do our best to ensure these wishes are carried out.

It is important to remember that if the deceased was travelling with a tour operator, they can be a valuable source of assistance and advice.

We appreciate that the NOK may not always live in the UK. Repatriations can be organised to most countries in the world.

If the death is under suspicious circumstances like in an incident of Murder or Manslaughter, the Burundi Police will be involved and they will usually, but not always the case, inform the British Embassy Liaison Office (BELO) in Bujumbura of their investigations. The process could take long and the consular staff at the British Embassy Liaison Office (BELO) in Bujumbura would do all that they can to acquire a police report.

Please note that if the death may have occurred naturally and if so, information about a police investigation is not applicable.

### **Post Mortem Examinations**

Legal Government pathologists carry out post mortems in Burundi. During the examination, organs can be removed for testing, including toxicological studies, at the discretion of the Doctor and **without** consent of next of kin. Occasionally, these organs are not returned.

### **Mortuary / Cold Storage Facilities**

The deceased body will normally be taken to a local hospital mortuary. You should be aware that storage facilities vary depending on the part of the country. Most of the major hospitals in the city of Bujumbura and towns in Burundi have mortuary/cold storage facilities. We cannot guarantee that the mortuary facilities will be comparable to the UK. We recommend that arrangements for your loved one are made as quickly as possible.

In normal circumstances after a person has passed away, the body of the deceased person will normally be placed at the local hospital mortuary/cold storage where a fee is charged per day.

### **Repatriation and Burial**

If the deceased is covered by travel insurance, the insurance company will normally have a standing agreement with an international funeral director in the UK to arrange repatriations. If the deceased is not covered by insurance, the next of kin will need to appoint an international undertaker.

A funeral director in Burundi or an International funeral director themselves will normally ensure that all necessary requirements are met in Burundi or to the country of repatriation. They are normally equipped with special caskets to carry out repatriation procedures for the international carriage of a deceased person or persons for the international carriage of human remains.

Documentation such as a local death certificate, a certificate of embalming, and a certificate giving permission to transfer the remains to the UK will always be required to ship the remains to the UK or out of Burundi is required to ship the body of the deceased person. The funeral directors will help arrange the documentation. Local formalities for repatriation would normally take 3 to 4 days to complete if the cause of death is of natural causes. In certain circumstances repatriation may not always be possible. Our consular staff will try and inform next of kin as soon as possible if this is the case.

This will be arranged by the Funeral Directors in Burundi. Local formalities vary depending on the circumstances under which the deceased died and local

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bureaucracy. The Funeral Director can advise on time frames. In certain circumstances immediate repatriation may not always be possible and our consular staff will try and inform next of kin as soon as possible if this is the case.

### **Local Cremation**

There is no local cremation services in Burundi. Rwanda would be the nearest country to have local cremation. This could be arranged with the Rwandan [list of funeral directors](#).

### **Local Burial**

A burial in Burundi is also possible. The funeral directors or undertakers can help to acquire burial permit and there will always be a fee charged for the burial ground in the cemetery.

If the death was accidental, or happened under suspicious circumstances a legal post mortem report, burial permit and acknowledgement from next of kin will be required before burial. The Funeral Director can arrange all the above.

Do note that an inquest will not take place in the UK if a local burial or local cremation takes place in Burundi.

### **Autopsies**

Certified pathologists carry out autopsies. During an autopsy, organs may be removed for testing, including toxicological studies, at the discretion of the pathologist, without consent from the next of kin. The autopsy report is usually available after the post mortem is carried out. In some instances there could be delays in getting the autopsy report.

### **Registration of the death in Burundi**

Burundi will issue death certificates in French depending on where the death occurred. You could try and ask for the English version if they have got one. The whole process would take a day to process (or a few hours).

Burundi death certificates may not give extensive details of the cause of death, as would be the case in the UK.

### **Consular Death Registration**

There is no obligation for the death of a British national overseas to be registered with the British Liaison Office in Bujumbura. However, you may wish to register the death in the United Kingdom so that their death is

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recorded with the General Register Office in the UK. More information about this procedure can be found at [www.gov.uk/register-a-death](http://www.gov.uk/register-a-death). You should be aware that regardless of whether you apply for a UK death registration, it is your responsibility to ensure authorities such as the Department of Work and Pensions, local councils, and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) are informed about your loved one's death.

### **Clothing and Personal belongings**

The deceased's clothing is in some circumstances retained as evidence and is not returned until the court case is finished.

Personal belongings found on the deceased at the time of death are either handed over to the family if they are present or taken by the police to be handed over to the courts.

Police will hand over the belongings of the deceased and his personal effects. A local lawyer or funeral directors could help in the process.

### **Police/Judicial Inquiries/Deaths in Suspicious circumstances**

The Police investigate all accidental or suspicious deaths. As well as examining the scene of the death, they will take statements from witnesses, and also interview family and/or friends of the deceased who are present in the country. If the police apprehend a suspect in a case of suspicious death, he/she will probably be remanded in custody whilst the police conduct an investigation. It usually takes several months (sometimes years) before a case comes to court for a full hearing.

If the circumstances of the death are not considered unusual by the police, registration of the death is permitted and the body will be released for repatriation or cremation within a few days.

However if the police are not satisfied after the preliminary examination of the facts, an autopsy may be required. Further investigations and interviews with witnesses may also be called for. The autopsy (post-mortem report) is usually available within a month after the death has occurred but this is not always the case. There may be possibilities of delays in the process.

The family can request a copy of the police report from the Burundi Police. Although, a police report may not be possible to get, if the Burundi Police are still carrying out investigations to the death.

### **Legal Aid**

Legal Aid is unfortunately not available in Burundi. You may wish to engage the services of a local lawyer to represent your interests should a trial be

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necessary. A list of English-speaking lawyers is available at the British Liaison Office in Bujumbura or on our [website](#).

### **Compensation**

There is no government compensation scheme in place for murder/manslaughter/terrorism cases in Burundi for foreign nationals or for local nationals.

### **Bereavement Counselling**

Bereavement counselling is unfortunately, not available or limited in Burundi. In the UK there are a number of organisations that can support and help bereaved families and friends to understand their grief and come to terms with their loss. Useful contacts include Cruse Bereavement Care [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) and Samaritans [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### **British Passport Cancellation**

In order to avoid identity fraud a deceased person's passport should be sent to the British Embassy Liaison Office (BELO) or to The British High Commission in Kigali for cancellation. Next of Kin can request the passport to be returned to them as soon as the cancellation is done. Likewise if the diseased UK passport has been lost or mislaid, relatives should contact us for instructions on reporting the loss of the passport.

### **International Undertaker Contact Details**

A list of International Funeral Directors can be found on the following [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) page;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-funeral-directors-in-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-funeral-directors-in-the-uk)

### **British High Commission Kigali Contact Details**

British High Commission Kigali Rwanda  
P O Box 567  
Kigali Rwanda  
Physical Location: KG 7 Ave - Opposite Umubano Hotel in Kacyiru  
Telephone: +250 252 556 000 (Answered 24 hours)  
Office Hours (walk-in consular queries): Monday – Thursday 08:00 – 12:00  
Friday 08:00 – 12:00  
Email: [BHC.Kigali@fco.gov.uk](mailto:BHC.Kigali@fco.gov.uk) (Monitored only during office hours)

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